



**U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement**

February 8, 2005

# News Release

## **3 HONDURANS SENTENCED TO 24+ YEARS IN PRISON FOR ALIEN SMUGGLING AND HOSTAGE TAKING**

*Three other defendants are set to be sentenced in March*

HOUSTON—Three of the six Hondurans convicted of hostage taking and alien smuggling were each sentenced Friday to more than 24 years in prison by U.S. District Judge Nancy Atlas, following an investigation by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

Jose Marlon Ibarra-Zelaya, 26, Jose Efrain Linares-Tabora, 27, and Marvin Arturo Peralta-Ramirez, 23, were the first three sentenced after six were convicted in October in federal court on hostage taking and alien smuggling. The three others, Edy Guardado-Mezen, Henry Gutierrez-Andrade, and Elbin Geovanny-Mezen are scheduled to be sentenced in March.

“We are pleased with today’s sentences,” said Joseph R. Webber, special agent-in-charge for the ICE Houston office. “We’ve seen a recent escalation in violence in smuggling cases, a trend that places our communities in danger. We will use every available tool at our disposal to combat these violent encounters.”

“The prosecution of this case represents our commitment to hold accountable those engaged in a growing trend in the human smuggling trade—the violent taking and holding of foreign nationals from other transporters for profit,” said U.S. Attorney, Michael Shelby. “The sentence represents justice is served.”

During a six-day trial last year, the government disclosed that a call made to 9-1-1 March 12 reported that several illegal aliens were being held at gunpoint inside an apartment at the 1300 block of Greens Parkway.

Houston police set up surveillance and noticed a vehicle matching the description from the 9-1-1 call. Police stopped the driver and discovered that none of the occupants had proper identification.

When police escorted Griselda Barnica-Magariegos, 25, to an apartment to retrieve her identification, officers noticed several people running to a back bedroom and contacted ICE for assistance. When ICE special agents arrived on scene, 15 undocumented aliens were arrested along with six smugglers. Some aliens had been able to escape through a bathroom window before ICE agents arrived. ICE agents also recovered several weapons from the toilet tank inside the bathroom.

According to ICE special agents, many of the undocumented aliens identified defendants Edy Guajardo-Mezen, Jose Marlon Ibarra-Zelaya, Elbin Geovanny-Mezen, Marvin Arturo Peralta-Ramirez, Jose Efrain Linares-Tabora, Henry Gutierrez-Andrade as the perpetrators who burst into an apartment with pistols and forced all the aliens to get into waiting vehicles. These smugglers had stolen a smuggling load from rival smugglers. The smuggled aliens were then transported to another apartment located on Greens Parkway.

Witnesses also identified Edy Guardado-Mezen as the smuggler who had placed a gun to the head of a rival female smuggler and robbed her of \$5,000. After the smuggled aliens arrived in Houston, the six defendants took the group of 15 undocumented aliens to the Greens Parkway apartment in several vehicles.

The remaining defendants, Edy Guajardo-Mezen, Henry Gutierrez-Andrade, and Albin Geovanny-Mezen will be sentenced in March. Each faces up to life in prison without parole.

Griselda Barnica-Magariegos was convicted of harboring and transporting illegal aliens and is also scheduled to be sentenced in March, and could face up to 10 years in prison.

# ICE #

*U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.*